

## An Old Powder Pointer Remembers

By DR. ALICE H. BIGELOW  
PART II

### LANDMARKS AND NEIGHBORS

Powder Point was early associated with the Indians. Excavations for modern cellars have cut through strata of shells suggesting mighty and ancient clembakes. Arrow heads are not uncommon in the fields. On the north side, near Chappa Challa, stone implements have been dug up. The very name of the Point derives from the natives. My generation was reared on the tradition that the Indians saw the Plymouth settlers planting fine black onion seed and thought it was gunpowder. They bartered for some gunpowder, paddled over to our Point, and planted it, without results.

The Gurnet bridge has now cut off shipping on the north side of the Point, for its draw was early cemented by rust, but once that channel was freely used. After the Indian canoes, came the early barge from Marshfield to Plymouth. Packets from Boston landed

at the Old Cove. I can remember the square shallow "gundalows" loaded with salt hay, to be piled in great stacks on the marshes, as bedding for cattle, and I watched lobster men sailing home through the marsh channels from Brant Rock. Sizable private boats were moored along the shore and in the Old Cove.

### Visiting Fish

Mackerel came in, formed in thick schools, and porgies, the oil fish. Another visitor was the sea. On the westerly end of Soule's Island just opposite my house, they had a sunning ground, worn bare to its mud base, like the otter slides of the north. Sun on their wet backs made them look white, but an opera glass picked them out in their grays and browns. They bobbed rather thickly through the water when we rowed over to the beach.

In the nineties arose the idea of a summer colony on the outer beach. Three houses were built there and a half-mile bridge was flung across the channel. We were given threatened with a trolley line to pass our homes and cross the bridge. This was too much for Mother Nature. The great storm of '98 brought a tidal wave that hit a hole through the beach just north of the bridge through which the tides ran for a year or two. Lesser holes to the south accompanied it. The three houses were floated to the mainland and only the bridge remained. Even now an occasional reminiscent roar of water comes over the bar in winter storms.

Half a mile south of the bridge was a small shed called the Half Way House, where the two life guards, patrolling from Brant Rock and the Gurnet, met to exchange tokens and to do any necessary telephoning. This was struck by lightning, and a woman taking refuge in its shelter was killed. It was finally destroyed by a storm.

### The Landings

Our town maintains a series of pleasant little lanes running down to the water, where anyone may go in swimming or moor a boat. These are called "town landings." One lies almost opposite my house. At its foot, by the water's edge, stood a small lightly built wooden house called the "Porgy House." The name indicated its early use for handling porgies for oil and fertilizer. All traces of that industry had gone, and an occasional family camped there for the summer. There the families of the neighborhood met for their daily swim. Children learned from their elders and it was a highly social hour, as everyone knew everyone else. Dr. John Adams in a historical

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### PART III

Many of our neighbors had their winter homes in East Boston, though deriving originally from Duxbury. This was because the shipping industry, when it left our town, followed by many to East Boston, followed by many who were interested in it. All about us were Petersons, a family which contributed much to public welfare, including a well-loved minister and a surgeon of national repute. These tied up originally with the Duxbury Petersons.

I had it from one of the Bryant sisters, who lived to old age on the slope of North Hill, that when ship building first moved to Boston, the Duxbury men who worked there at it walked home Saturday nights, a fair 40 miles, and back again in 24 hours. The town has always drawn its sons home, often from farther ports than East Boston.

### How We Lived

Life on our Point in the '80s and '90s was extremely simple and hence extremely happy. There was no mechanism to break, to leak, to burn out, or to be cut off at the centre. All necessities were at hand, and dependable.

Water was the supreme need. The houses about us were built with wells under the kitchens and

pumps directly over them to supply the sinks. But our well was 40 feet from the house and 40 feet deep. When my father bought the house in 1886, it has been abandoned and closed, and the well pit dumped full of rubbish. Three cartloads were carried off, and my mother saw hoop-skirts in the mass. Then a workman went down on a rope and reported a tub without a bottom set in the base. He cleaned out its sandy contents and then sent up the cry "Haul me up. The water's coming in." It was sweet cold spring water, and it has never failed, holding its own with thirsty outdoor workers against the town supply from the sophisticated piping.

For many years my brother and I drew up our supply with a couple of alternating buckets and carried it to the house. Eventually a good many people built windmills to pump for them till the town took over. The 40-foot well has a double lining of rounded stones knocked together for a century or two, without cement, by the ancient magic of the stone mason.

Food of all sorts came to the door; meat from the butcher, fish and lobsters from a shop at Cut River, and vegetables fresh from the village farms. The fishman blew his horn as he approached and the housewives got out their clean plates in expectation, but the family cats beat them to the roadside and lined up for their share. The fishman was Tom Pezzi of Cut River and the roof of his shop bore the slogan "Tom Pezzi forever." We must have made our own bread, for I can remember carrying about portions of liquid potato yeast among the neighbors, lent or borrowed as "risings" for a new lot. Milk came warm from a neighbor's barn night and morning, and that errand was mine.

Heat centered in a sturdy coal stove, backed by a generous fireplace which originally had been the cooking centre of the house. Light came from kerosene, with

lamps returned to the sink shelf for polishing. They still stand above the cellar stairs against the days when it storms and the lights go out.

### The Stores

Groceries were sold by four good stores, which sent out their men in the morning for orders and delivered the goods in the afternoon. Winsor and Peterson's was on Washington St. near Surplus St. Scott Freeman's, the general store, was universally known as "Scott's". It has become Sweetser's, and perpetuates its ancient sign of "English and West India Goods." This was no figure of speech when our ships were circling the world. The rambling old Ford's store, near the water works, is gone, but has taken its place in history. At the flag pole stood the Union store, kept by "Uncle Josiah" Peterson, who gave the children rides in his light wagon and sold them candy. I had to stand on a box to make my early purchases in that commodity.

For sport the children had plenty of swimming and rowing and a little sailing. Many of us had to grow up and begin to earn before we achieved sailboats of our own. We began tennis early, on a home-made court. Across the road from my house, where now stands another house, was a clear field where we laid out the court with a broom dipped into a bucket of lime and water. Our feet soon wore the grass down to smoothness. We learned from our neighbors, as we did swimming and sailing. No perfect techniques, but a vast amount of fun.

Hiking was no small part of our pleasure, and we knew what grew on the countryside, flowers as well as berries. There were several delicate orchids, the great white swamp honeysuckle, cardinals in the brooks, and gentians. Over on Great Wood Island, where we went in a dory, grew the straight red lily, which we found nowhere else. We had regular

dates with all these old friends.

All towns have familiar nicknames for their native children, as we had to learn in this one. The mason who helped to restore our house was called "Jim Allen", but when my mother addressed him as Mr. Allen, he said his name was Simmons, Jim Allen Simmons, of Tinkertown. Mr. Freeman, the storekeeper, was always Scott. A very early friend of mine, who bound our friendship with a doughnut, was "Sally B." She turned out to be Mrs. Sally Bradford Wright, who lived in the ancient gambrel roofed house that stands on the bias to the street, lately

the home of Miss Howland.

My generation had few toys, certainly no gasoline engines, and they played with the place rather than with things. They got to know the town intimately, by land and by sea, at high water and low water. Out of that early intimate knowledge grew a devoted affection that was to last for life.